

**: OF THE CITY OF PEORIA, ILLINOIS:  
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMISSION  
Regular Meeting**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The Regular Meeting was held by the Human Resources Commission (HRC) in Room 404 at City Hall, 419 Fulton St., Peoria, Illinois, on September 18, 2015, at 8:30 a.m. Chairperson Nancy Rakoff called the meeting to order @ 8:33 a.m.

Chairperson Rakoff thanked all Commissioners for their commitment and time dedicated to the Commission. She stated that in order to facilitate the Commission discussion, the meeting will be conducted as followed:

- 1) In order for Commissioners to speak, they must be recognized, by raising their hand , prior to speaking;
- 2) Chairperson Rakoff will call on Commissioners and take into consideration past comments made by Commissioners in order to provide everyone an opportunity to speak;
- 3) After Commission, staff, and Council liaison discussion members of the public will be given an opportunity to speak;
- 4) Upon completion of the discussion, Chairperson Rakoff will call for any motion to be made by Commissioners.

**ROLL CALL**

Roll call showed the following Commissioners were present: Nancy Rakoff, Mark Brown, Shandra Hennessey, Patrick Kirchhofer, Brett Kolditz, Josh Moore, Judy Oakford, Ivan Williams – 8.

Absent: Norman Burdick, Anthony Gardner, Greg Stout, Nancy Venzon – 4.

Council Liaison Present: Council Member Denise Moore

Staff Present: Kathryn Murphy, Nicole Frederick.

Others present: Helen Jenkins, Common Place  
Jeff Gress, Crittenton Centers  
Melanie McNiff, Peoria Friendship House  
Carol Merna, The Center for Prevention of Abuse  
Sandy Arreguin, Peoria Friendship House  
Becky Rossmann, Neighborhood House  
Connie Voss, Common Place  
Kevin Nowlan, The Center for Prevention of Abuse

**MINUTES**

The minutes for the August 21, 2015 meeting were reviewed.

**MOTION:**

Commissioner Judy Oakford moved that the minutes be approved; seconded by Commissioner Patrick Kirchofer. The minutes were approved unanimously by viva voce vote 8 to 0.

**OLD BUSINESS****A. Approval of the Revised 2016/2017 Application Timeline**

Chairperson Rakoff summarized the request that was sent by the Commission to City Council for its September 8, 2015 meeting. She stated that she attended the Council meeting. At that meeting, a motion was made by Council Member Moore to select the top five ranked HRC funding priorities and add a sixth funding priority, employment training. The Council was divided on selecting priorities and voted in favor of a deferral until its October 13, 2015 meeting.

In addition to the selection of the funding priorities, Chairperson Rakoff stated that the Council had discussion related to the minimum grant award and funding threshold. This item was also included in the deferral to the October 13, 2015 meeting.

Chairperson Rakoff stated that during this deferral time interval, City staff has been asked to gather information related to social services, employment training opportunities, past CDBG funding priorities and other data that will be reported back to City Council on October 13<sup>th</sup>.

Chairperson Rakoff asked Staff Member Kathryn Murphy if she had any items that she would like to highlight from her memo that was addressed to the Commission as a part of the agenda packet. Staff Member Murphy stated that the only item requiring Commission action is the approval of the revised timeline due to Council deferral.

Chairperson Rakoff requested that staff provide a summary of the timeline and the impact of the slotted January 12, 2016 Council meeting date for final funding recommendations.

Staff Member Nicole Frederick stated that at this time it is unknown if Council will hold a second meeting in December 2016. The proposed meeting date is December 22<sup>nd</sup> – the week of Christmas. To err on the side of caution, it would be best to have the final funding recommendations be presented to City Council at the first meeting in 2016 (January 12, 2016) with grant award start dates being retroactive to January 1, 2016.

Chairperson Rakoff asked for any public comment regarding the timeline and grant award retroactive date. Seeing none, she called for a motion to approve the revised 2016/2017 application timeline.

**MOTION:**

Commissioner Josh Moore moved that the revised 2016/2017 application timeline be approved; seconded by Commissioner Ivan Williams. The timeline was approved unanimously by viva voce vote 8 to 0.

**B. Discussion and Potential Action on 2016/2017 Application Materials**

Chairperson Rakoff stated that from staff memo to the Commission, the Commission may take action on the minimum grant award. She requested that staff summarize the minimum grant award history.

Staff Member Frederick stated that at the August 20, 2012 meeting, the Commission discussed establishing a minimum grant award for the 2013 applications. In her review of the meeting minutes, the minimum grant award was suggested by staff as a result of personnel reductions within City Hall and the consolidated of work assignments. At that time the Commission suggested establishing a minimum grant request and funding threshold of \$15,000; however Commission action made the minimum grant request \$15,000 and minimum grant award \$10,000. The policy went into effect for the 2013 applications, remained for the 2014/2015 applications and was recommended to continue for the 2016/2017 application process.

Commissioner Kirchhofer requested that staff provide the history of the CDBG public service funding for the 2013, 2014 and 2015 grant terms.

Staff Member Murphy provided the following:

2013 funds - \$241,485

2014 funds - \$237,285

2015 funds - \$233,269

Representing a net decrease of 3.4% in funding levels.

Commissioner Josh Moore stated there is a benefit to maintaining grant award levels, not only for efficient staff/grant administration, but also to provide reasonable resources that yield concrete results for the agencies.

Commissioner Mark Brown stated that one of the benefits of CDBG funding is the leveraging of resources and matched funds from awarded agencies. Many of the awarded agencies use CDBG funding to match other grants. Other grant requirements have minimum threshold amounts for eligible matching sources. Therefore, if the Commission reduces the awarded funding minimum, agencies may not be able to use CDBG funding for other matching requirements and thus the leveraging of other grant resources are lost.

Chairperson Rakoff asked for any public comment regarding minimum grant award thresholds. Seeing none, she called for any motion to be made from Commissioners regarding the minimum grant award.

**MOTION:**

Commissioner Brett Kolditz moved to keep the recommended minimum grant award at \$10,000 with the minimum grant request be \$15,000; seconded by Commissioner Oakford.

Discussion:

Commissioner Josh Moore suggested that both the grant request and minimum grant award be \$10,000.

Chairperson Rakoff stated that there are logistical issues with keeping both the minimum request and award amounts the same. She stated potential issues could arise when funding levels are determined and the available funds are not enough to award the highest ranked applications with the minimum grant award.

Commissioner Shandra Hennessey stated that retaining the \$5,000 margin between the grant request and minimum grant award provides for flexibility in awarding funds to the highest ranked applications.

The minimum grant award of \$10,000, with the minimum grant request of \$15,000 was approved unanimously by viva voce vote 8 to 0.

### **C. Discussion and Potential Action on 2016/2017 Public Service Priorities**

Chairperson Rakoff stated that from staff memo to the Commission, the Commission may take action on the funding priorities. She stated in her opinion the Commission has the following options:

- 1) Recommend no specific number or identified funding priorities to Council and allow all 21 HUD activities to be eligible for funding;
- 2) Commission identify and select a specific set of funding priorities and recommend those to Council; or
- 3) Leave the Commission recommendation as is and request that Council select 5 funding priorities at their October 13<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Chairperson Rakoff recognized that there may be other variations of potential Commission action and opened the discussion.

Commissioner Oakford stated that Commissioners took the time to consider the needs of the community, independently reviewed and ranked the funding priorities and the result of the survey rankings is the collective voice of the Commission. She stated that the top five priorities should remain as is in the ranking order.

Commissioner Williams agreed with Commissioner Oakford and stated that a possible process for future application cycles should be that Council state clear expectations, goals and identify community needs prior to the Commission reviewing the eligible HUD activities and ranking priorities. However, for the 2016/2017 application process, Commissioner Williams stated that the Commission should respect the process of ranking and rating that was completed and submit the highest ranked funding priorities to Council.

Commissioner Josh Moore stated that employment training offered by agencies in our community have access to potential available funding, particularly Federal funding. The potential agencies that could offer programs that serve the priorities the Commission ranked the highest are facing limited choices and options due to the State's budget reductions.

Council Liaison Denise Moore questioned Commissioner Josh Moore's statement regarding available Federal resources to employment training and what agencies offer such services.

Commissioner Josh Moore, in response to Council Liaison Denise Moore's question, stated he is unsure of all available resources and agencies that offer employment training, but stated that Goodwill is an organization that provides significant training for the community. He also stated that the unemployment rate for the City is approx. 5.1% and is considerably lower than in years past.

Council Liaison Denise Moore stated that although the City wide unemployment rate is lower, the rate of unemployment for African-Americans who reside in the 61602/61605 zip codes is approximately 26%.

Commissioner Josh Moore stated that if unemployment is higher for one population or area of the community then any proposed employment training should be dedicated to that area/population.

Commissioner Oakford stated that all Commissioners have personal knowledge or connection with programs for a specific population or service area. However, she has not witnessed a Commissioner advocating for a particular program, agency or service. She believes that Commissioners uphold a level field and take a balanced approach when participating in the CDBG application process.

Chairperson Rakoff stated that she has reviewed very creative applications submitted by agencies in the past. She believes that regardless of the approved priorities, agencies find ways to access funds to serve people.

Chairperson Rakoff asked for any other Commissioner comment regarding the funding priorities. Seeing none, she opened the public comment period.

Becky Rossman of the Neighborhood House stated that she agreed with Council Member Moore that employment training is needed for the residents of 61605 zip code area. Currently, the Neighborhood House is in discussions with other community partners to become a Financial Opportunity Center for the area. The Financial Opportunity Center would provide approximately \$150,000 to \$200,000 to the Neighborhood House to provide a wide array of self-sufficiency services. However, she stated that a large need still exists for youth and child care services. Currently, with the reductions to Child Care Connection, a childcare subsidy provide by the State, many families are forced to either leave children at home unattended or stop working. She stated that continued services available through the Neighborhood House and their partner agencies for child, youth and seniors serve the most vulnerable populations in our community.

Commissioner Hennessey agreed with Becky Rossman of the Neighborhood House and stated that securing employment for some individuals require other supportive services, like child care.

Jeff Gress of the Crittenton Center agreed with Becky Rossman of the Neighborhood House and expanded on her comments to discuss the impact on the community due to the lack of options for a working family. He stated that it has been his agency's experience that when the adult or head of household cannot work due to lack of child care options it increases the potential for abuse or neglect of a child. He stated that abused or neglected children are 60% more likely to be arrested as a juvenile and individuals arrested as a juvenile are also more likely to be arrested as an adult. He stated that early intervention for the child and family is the key to long-term sustainability.

Commissioner Hennessey agreed with Jeff Gress of the Crittenton Center and added that it can be difficult for individuals to reenter the workforce after an extend period of time after caring for children due to lack of tenure of work experience.

Helen Jenkins of Common Place stated that she appreciates the opportunity to be creative with the CDBG application. She stated that while the primary focus of her agency's youth program is education, employment training and job readiness is an important part of the ongoing counseling provided to the youth in the program.

Council Liaison Denise Moore asked Helen Jenkins of Common Place if her agency includes the employment training services on the CDBG application.

Helen Jenkins of Common Place in response to Council Liaison Denise Moore's question stated no.

Chairperson Rakoff stated that agencies are asked on the CDBG application to indicate the most applicable funding priority that applies to an agency's program. She stated that while many agencies offer a wide variety of services under one program, it is typical and appropriate to have a core focus.

Melanie McNiff of Peoria Friendship House stated that her comments would be identical to those of Jeff Gress of Crittenton Center and Becky Rossman of Neighborhood House. She added that it would be a significant loss if the opportunity to apply for youth services and child care services were not offered. She stated that Friendship House's youth programs are more than just childcare services and provides an opportunity for a child to get excited about learning and an emphasis on character building. The availability of reliable childcare is a crucial component when a parent begins a job.

Kevin Nowlan for The Center for Prevention of Abuse discussed the emergency shelter provided by the Center for individuals, typically women, fleeing domestic violence. In most cases, the Center's clients were not allowed to work as a control measure imposed by their abuser. Therefore, employment training and counseling is an integral part of case management offered to clients once safe shelter is provided.

Council Liaison Denise Moore stated, that as she shared with the Commission at last month's meeting, she was one of those victims fleeing domestic violence and utilized similar types of services offered by another organization. She stated that she appreciated everyone coming together and speaking at the Commission meeting.

Chairperson Rakoff thanked the public audience and Commission for their comments and asked for any discussion. She again summarized the actions taken by Commission that was forwarded to City Council at their September 8<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Council Liaison Denise Moore requested clarification regarding the request for Council action presented at the September 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. She was under the impression that the Commission recommended the five highest ranked priorities to be the funded priorities for the 2016/2017 application.

Staff Member Frederick reread the memo that was sent to City Council on September 8<sup>th</sup> that requested Council to select five funding priorities. She stated that the survey results were included as supporting documentation for the clear break of ranked priorities by the Commission.

Commissioner Oakford asked if a motion was needed for the funding priorities if the Commission does not want to alter its original request to Council.

Staff Member Frederick stated that to be consistent with the last action, an approved motion to have the minimum grant funding levels remain the same, it would be appropriate to take action on the funding priorities if only to solidify the Commission's original request to Council remain as is.

Council Liaison Denise Moore requested of the agencies present, does any agency offer a program where employment training is one of its core focus.

Becky Rossman of the Neighborhood House stated that at this time no, however, with discussions of the Financial Opportunity Center it may become one of the core initiatives for the agency.

Melanie McNiff of Peoria Friendship House stated that services offered to clients are designed to be all encompassing and employment training and job readiness is one of the core components of every interaction with clients.

Council Liaison Denise Moore stated that she wants to make it very clear to everyone in the room that she has no problems or concerns with the top ranked priorities or how the priorities were categorized or voted on. She is simply requesting that the Commission add employment training as another priority. She stated that if the Commission does not add employment training they are stating that as a Commission employment services are not important. She thanked the Commission for its work and the needed service it provides to the City. She also stated that maybe she should have made phone calls to get agencies that provide employment training to attend today's meeting. She stated she will be requesting Council to add employment training to the eligible funding priorities. She stated that City Council has neglected its role in putting money towards a much needed service. She stated that she intends to hold City Council accountable to the amount of money spent on employment training.

Chairperson Rakoff asked for any other Commissioner comment regarding the funding priorities. Seeing none, she called for any motion to be made from Commissioners regarding the priorities.

Commissioner Kolditz asked if it is customary for the Commission to send specific recommendations of funding priorities to Council for approval.

Staff Member Frederick stated that Staff Member Murphy included in the agenda packet the history of the past five years of funding priorities. She stated that staff assemble this list of the funding priorities from past Council agendas in which Council voted to approve a specific list of funding priorities recommended from the Commission. She stated that it is traditionally the role of the Commission to recommend specific funding priorities to Council for their approval, revision or denial.

**MOTION:**

Commissioner Brown made a motion to specifically recommend Child Care Services (Under 13), Youth Services (13 to 19), Services for Abused and Neglected Children, Senior Services and Mental Health Services to City Council for the funding priorities and request that Council adds employment training if that is the will of the Council; seconded by Commissioner Oakford.

## Discussion:

Commissioner Williams stated that he has no issue with employment training and views it as a worthwhile service. However, he stated that he would have an issue with the Commission adding employment training when that priority was not ranked 6<sup>th</sup> by the Commission, but 11<sup>th</sup>. If the Commission would add employment training it would bypass five other priorities (Services for Battered and Abused Spouses, Handicapped Services, Substance Abuse Services, Health Services and Food Banks) that were ranked higher by the Commission.

Chairperson Rakoff clarified that Commissioner Brown's motion does not add employment training as a 6<sup>th</sup> priority.

Commissioner Kirchhofer asked Council Liaison Denise Moore if she knew of specific agencies or programs that offer employment training.

Council Liaison Denise Moore stated she has no one agency or program in mind and is not trying to bring more agencies to the table, although increasing the number of available funding priorities may increase the eligibility of an agency to apply.

Commissioner Brown agreed with Commissioner Williams and stated that the adding of any additional priorities beyond the top ranked priorities from the Commission needs to be discussed and addressed at the City Council level not by the Commission. Therefore, Commissioner Brown withdrew his original motion.

**MOTION:**

Commissioner Kolditz made a motion to specifically recommend Child Care Services (Under 13), Youth Services (13 to 19), Services for Abused and Neglected Children, Senior Services and Mental Health Services to City Council for the 2016/2017 funding priorities; seconded by Commissioner Williams.

## Discussion:

Commissioner Kirchhofer stated that this motion may be an unpopular action, but was appropriate in order to provide a clear recommendation to Council and relieve some of the political pressure.

The 2016/2017 funding priorities of Child Care Services (Under 13), Youth Services (13 to 19), Services for Abused and Neglected Children, Senior Services and Mental Health Services was approved unanimously by viva voce vote 8 to 0.

Chairperson Rakoff stated for clarification that City Council may add, subtract or revision the recommendation of specific funding priorities from the Commission at its October 13<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Commissioner Brown thanked Council Liaison Denise Moore for attending the meeting and hoped she understood the position of the Commission related to the funding priorities.

Council Liaison Denise Moore stated it was hard for her to understand how people do not value the importance of employment training and services. She stated she receives numerous calls from residents in the 61602/61605 zip codes voicing concerns with lack of employment options. She stated the Commission's recommendation regarding funding priorities did not relieve pressure from the Council and she intends to hold the mirror to City Council and show that the City has done a very bad job with employment options and services. She stated that employment training may not get done at this Commission, but it will happen.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

##### **A. Other Business**

None.

##### **B. Citizen Comments**

None.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

##### **MOTION:**

Commissioners Moore motioned to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Commissioner Kirchhofer.

**The motion was approved unanimously viva voce vote 8 to 0.**

The meeting was adjourned @ 9:33 a.m.

Meeting Minutes prepared by:

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Nicole Frederick